


Approved for Release
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Date

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) BULLETIN # 027, FY06**

SUBJECT: Presidential Management Fellows Program

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon release of this HR Bulletin

EXPIRATION DATE: Effective until canceled or superseded.

SUPERCEDES: HR Bulletin 027 dated April 12, 2006

BACKGROUND: The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has issued final regulations modifying the Presidential Management Intern (PMI) Program. The regulations implement Executive Order 13318, which renames the PMI Program as the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program, with two components: Presidential Management Fellows (Fellows) and Senior Presidential Management Fellows (Senior Fellows). The Executive Order dated November 21, 2003, establishes the Senior Presidential Management Fellows program; however, OPM has not officially launched the Program. Therefore, this HR Bulletin does not cover the Senior Fellows component as policies and procedural guidance are still under development.

A Fellow is an individual appointed, at the GS-9, GS-11, or GS-12 level (or equivalent) in the excepted service. The individual must have completed a graduate course of study at a qualifying college or university, received the nomination of the dean or academic director, successfully completed an OPM administered assessment process, been selected as a finalist, and been appointed by an agency as a Fellow.

The OPM PMF Program Office (OPM Program Office) is responsible for the overall management of this Federal Government program, including nationwide recruitment, PMF orientation training, and a PMF graduation program. Those selected as Presidential Management Fellows receive an initial 2-year excepted service appointment, and after successfully completing the program and obtaining certification by the bureau/office Executive Resources Board (ERB) or equivalent, must be converted to a full-time, permanent position in the competitive service. To be eligible for a PMF appointment, a candidate must:

a. Complete or expect to complete an advanced degree from a college or university that meets the accreditation requirements as stated in the OPM Operating Manual by August 31 of the academic year in which the competition is held.

b. Receive the nomination of the dean or academic program director of their college or university; and

c. Successfully complete an assessment process administered by OPM and be selected by OPM as a PMF finalist.

PURPOSE: This bulletin establishes the Department of Commerce (DOC) policy for the Presidential Management Fellows (Fellows). The Department recognizes the value of the PMF program as a mechanism for attracting and retaining outstanding women and men with leadership potential. This policy provides for systematic PMF Program practices and procedures to help address the increasing need to bridge competency gaps in the Department's workforce, and to replace the Department's managers and supervisors who are becoming eligible for retirement. This policy applies to all Departmental managers, supervisors, and PMF Program providers and participants. Additional information about the Federal Government's PMF Program may be found at <http://www.pmf.opm.gov>.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS. PMF appointees count against personnel ceilings. To hire a PMF, supervisors must have an approved permanent full-time position available at the time a selection is made. Additionally, OPM requires payment of a reimbursement fee which covers costs associated with the recruitment, selection, placement, orientation, and graduation of Fellows. Reimbursement fees are paid by the bureau or office within 30 days of acceptance of a PMF appointment. The Department's Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) serves as the Program Policy Office and is responsible for developing and implementing PMF program policy and guidance. Each bureau/office must appoint a PMF program coordinator(s). The designated PMF Coordinator(s) is responsible for managing and administering all aspects of the Department's PMF Program. The Department's Office of Human Resources Management will provide accountability oversight for the program.

PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES.

a. The Department is the liaison office between the OPM Program Office and bureau/office PMF Coordinator(s). The bureau/office PMF Coordinator(s) is responsible for monitoring and facilitating recruitment, hiring, and employment policies and procedures across the bureau for the PMF program, and represents the Department during OPM's annual PMF Job Fair.

b. Supervisors will identify positions in their organizations to be filled through the PMF Program. Supervisors are encouraged to attend the annual PMF Job Fair to meet the candidates, promote the agency, and interview for their positions. Job offers will be made only by the PMF Coordinator(s) or servicing HR Specialist. To balance the development of Fellows and enhance their performance, supervisors will:

- (1) Develop an Individual Development Plan (IDP) with each PMF selected within 30 days of the Fellow's appointment;
- (2) Authorize and monitor completion of at least one 4-6 month developmental assignment in the occupation or functional discipline in which the Fellow will most likely be placed. This assignment must have full-time management and/or technical responsibility consistent with the Fellow's IDP;
- (3) Ensure completion of required training; and
- (4) Support the Fellow's participation in developmental activities.

c. Bureau/office PMF Coordinator(s) are responsible for advising on and communicating PMF Program requirements to supervisors, and for coordinating their organization's PMF recruitment and appointments. In addition, the bureau/office PMF Coordinator(s) is responsible for monitoring and overseeing the training and development of Fellows within the bureau to ensure Fellows are receiving the training and developmental/rotational assignment(s) set forth by the OPM regulations. By established deadline dates each year, bureau/office PMF Coordinator(s) will advise the Department's PMF Coordinator of their projected positions and enter those positions in OPM's Projected Positions System (PPS). At the time of a PMF appointment, bureau/office PMF Coordinator(s) will immediately complete OPM Form 1616 (Interagency/Intergovernmental Agreement) to pay the required reimbursement fees, and forward the form to the Department's PMF Coordinator for further review and processing. Bureau/office PMF Coordinator(s) must immediately notify the Department's PMF Coordinator of any PMF hires and provide the appointment dates.

d. PMF appointees participate in the development of their IDPs with their supervisors and oversight from their bureau/office PMF Coordinator(s). Fellows will participate in various OPM, Department, bureau/office-sponsored program activities, such as formal and informal orientations, training, graduation, rotational and shadowing assignments, and other developmental activities. Fellows should assist with planning and organizing other meetings and workshops that contribute to their development.

e. The Department's Training Officer's Council will perform the initial review for successful completion of PMF Program requirements for Fellows. The Department's Training Officer's Council must consider whether: 1) the Fellow has met all of the requirements of the program as outlined in the program regulations found at 5 CFR 362; 2) has demonstrated successful performance according to the individual's performance plan; and 3) has achieved the developmental expectations set forth in the IDP. The results of the Department's Training Officer's Council review are forwarded to the Bureau-level Executive Resources Boards (ERB) for certification. The results of the ERB certification are forwarded to the bureau/office PMF Coordinator(s). The bureau/office PMF Coordinator(s) will forward the certification results to the Department's PMF Coordinator for transmission to OPM.

APPOINTMENTS. Fellows are appointed to the excepted service (5 CFR 213.3102(ii)). A bureau/office must appoint a Fellow at the GS-9 level or equivalent, at a minimum. However, if the bureau/office determines that a Fellow meets the requisite qualification requirements, the bureau/office may appoint the Fellow at the GS-11 or GS-12 level, or their equivalents. OPM assesses PMF applicants for general eligibility and initial appointment at the GS-9 grade level or equivalent. To make an initial appointment above the GS-9 grade level or equivalent, the bureau/office servicing personnel office will determine that the PMF finalist meets the applicable qualification standards for the position at a higher grade level, e.g., GS-11, GS-12, or equivalent. A higher step within the GS-9 pay range or equivalent may be permissible if the PMF had prior, higher level Federal civilian service. The bureau/office servicing personnel office will determine the permissible rate based on application of the highest previous rate rule. For agencies participating in Demonstration Projects or Alternative Personnel Management Systems, the supervisor may set pay anywhere within the pay band to which the Fellow is appointed.

Bureaus/offices may make superior qualifications appointments above the minimum rate at any grade level covered by this HR Bulletin as long as the increase does not exceed 20 percent of the candidate's existing pay. Superior qualifications appointments at any rate above 20 percent of the candidates existing pay may be affected only with prior approval of the bureau's/office's Director of Human Resources or designee and concurrence of their Chief Financial Officers. Bureaus/offices must make PMF appointments no later than 12 months after selection as a finalist.

VETERANS' PREFERENCE. Veterans' preference is adjudicated by OPM and annotated on the resumes of PMF finalists. Bureaus/offices will apply Part 302 CFR when a veteran expresses an interest in a PMF position. "Expresses an interest" means a veteran contacts the agency in person, by phone, or provides a resume requesting consideration for a PMF appointment. If the veteran is then not selected, the bureau/office will prepare a written justification documenting the reason(s) why the veteran was not qualified or did not meet the criteria for the position. A copy of the justification will be provided to the veteran, if requested.

PROMOTION CRITERIA. Fellows may be promoted up to the GS-13 level, or its equivalent. PMFs as excepted service employees are not required to meet the 1-year time-in-grade requirements. However, as the minimum assessment period under the performance appraisal system is 120 days, PMF's will not be eligible for promotion until that minimum timeframe has been met. Additionally, promotions may not be recommended by the supervisor until the PMF meets all requirements for promotion as identified by his/her IDP. The IDP must indicate the competencies required for each level as well as provide a benchmark identifying the successful acquisition of the needed competencies. Future promotions are dependent upon the Department's or bureaus' Merit Assignment Program, the position's career ladder and full performance level, the employee's time-in-grade, and his/her performance.

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (IDP). A Fellow's IDP will be completed within 30 days after the PMF enters on duty. Fellows will prepare the IDP in consultation with their supervisors and with oversight from the bureau/office PMF Coordinator(s). IDPs are designed for the 2-year appointment and tailored to specific learning objectives that will provide the Fellow with knowledge and skills needed in the current and target positions. As necessary, IDPs should be updated to include previously unforeseen training and development requirements.

Each IDP should be individually tailored around the following elements:

a. Target Position: A brief description of the target position, and the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities that will be needed to qualify for the target position upon successful completion of the 2-year program.

b. Learning Objective: The learning objective should include general management areas, as well as specific technical skills and experiences, which will qualify the Fellow for the target position at the end of fellowship.

c. Details and Timeline: The IDP should clearly indicate when and how the learning objectives will be accomplished. The plan should outline the required developmental assignments as well as the 80 hours of formal classroom training each year of the fellowship, including the PMF Program's orientation and graduation training.

d. Demonstrated Success: The IDP should include a means for tracking accomplishment of all IDP objectives at the end of the 2-year fellowship. The supervisor and the Fellow should be partners in determining that the objectives set forth in the IDP have been accomplished. Should events preclude a Fellow from attaining specific learning objectives by a particular date, alternative arrangements should be made with his/her supervisor.

ORIENTATION, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT. Supervisors will provide a minimum of 80 hours per year of formal classroom training for each Fellow. OPM-sponsored PMF training counts toward the annual 80-hour requirement. Fellow will attend the following training:

a. OPM's Orientation Training Program (24 hours). Each PMF will complete this training during the first year of employment. This orientation session provides Fellows with an overall perspective on the Federal government and the PMF Program, and includes components on leadership, communications, teamwork, preparation of IDPs, and the session provides valuable networking opportunities.

b. Department Orientation Training (16 hours) conducted by the Department's Office of Human Resources Management. To be completed during the first year, this training covers the Department's mission, organizational structure, and strategic plans.

c. OPM's PMF Graduation Training Ceremony (16 hours), to be completed during the second PMF year. This training session focuses on managing and leading effective organizations, and builds upon topics that were introduced during the PMF Orientation and Training Program.

DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES. In addition to formal training, development includes activities such as: on-the-job training, mentoring sessions, career management counseling, rotational assignments, educational brown bag lunches, cross training, career broadening assignments, and attendance at conferences, workshops, and off-site meetings. Bureaus/offices may provide additional informal training and development through participation in other activities, such as:

a. Shadowing Assignments. Fellows may complete shadowing assignments of a short duration, such as one week. By shadowing managers, Fellows gain insight regarding the scope of managerial responsibilities and management approaches.

b. Readings and Seminars. Fellows may meet informally with their supervisors, organizational staff, and other Fellows to discuss books or articles on areas of interest such as public administration, and management and natural resource conservation.

c. Meet-the-Manager Sessions. Fellows may meet with other managers outside of their organizations to discuss managerial duties and responsibilities, current Departmental and bureau level issues and recommendations regarding the Fellow's career development.

d. Program Impact Paper. At the end of the first and second years of the program, Fellows may be asked to prepare a short paper discussing their experiences and observations.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT. When establishing performance plans and accomplishing annual performance appraisals for Fellows, supervisors will adhere to policy guidance in accordance with the Department Administrative Order 202-430, Performance Appraisal and the Performance Management Handbook. During the Fellowship, a three-way feedback process between the supervisor, the Fellow and the bureau/office PMF Coordinator(s) should be implemented to address the Fellow's developmental progress and the adequacy of development experiences. Supervisors must monitor the Fellow's work progress and provide feedback on how well the Fellow is performing in meeting the learning objectives of the IDP. Supervisors must also identify areas needing improvement so that any unacceptable performance can be addressed, and corrected before the end of an appraisal period. Fellows must be evaluated and rated satisfactorily on their work performance prior to advancement in grade levels, and prior to conversion to the competitive service.

DEVELOPMENTAL/ROTATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS. Developmental assignments are intended to broaden the Fellow's perspectives on the work of the Department, produce a more insightful employee and eventually a more effective leader. Bureaus/offices must provide a PMF

at least one developmental assignment of 4 to 6 months in the occupation or functional discipline in which the Fellow will most likely be placed, with full-time management or technical responsibilities consistent with the developmental assignments outline in the Fellow's IDP. Developmental assignment can range from specific assignments at a Fellow's home agency, to an extended rotation in another agency or even outside the Federal Government. The assignments are to be clearly outlined and negotiated in advance with the Fellow's supervisor.

In addition, the supervisor may elect to provide the Fellow with additional rotational assignments of 1 to 6 months to any field desired. Rotations can take Fellows to another bureau, division, office, program, or even another agency or branch of the Federal Government. Fellows can gain management experience, work in specific occupational fields, or learn about a program function from another agency perspective. The nature of the rotational assignment should be mutually agreed upon by the supervisor and the Fellow. While rotational assignments may not directly relate to the Fellow's present position or current field, assignments will relate to the overall career path identified by the supervisor and Fellow in the IDP. The Fellow's supervisor, and host organizations should mutually agree on the timing of rotational assignments to preclude conflict with work in the home organization.

Documentation must provide a clear understanding of the expectations, goals, and timing of the assignment. Rotational assignment supervisors are responsible for preparing an assessment of the Fellow's performance at the conclusion of the assignment, which will be used by the Supervisor of record in completing the Fellow's annual performance evaluation.

Rotational assignments must be carefully planned so as to provide maximum benefits for the Fellow and the office where the training occurs. Training objective should be well defined ahead of the assignment. Each rotational assignment should be evaluated at the end of the training period. The rotational assignment supervisor should provide written documentation to the supervisor of record about the training received and work accomplished. Upon completion of the rotation, Fellows will return to their position of record.

In coordination with the PMF and the supervisor, the host organization will prepare a written plan for the Fellow's developmental assignment to include:

- a. Dates of the assignment;
- b. Duties that the PMF will perform;
- c. Relationship of the developmental assignment to the Fellow's career goals;
- d. How the Fellow's performance will be appraised during the assignment; and
- e. Long-term benefit to the Department of the Fellow's developmental experience.

PROGRAM MENTORS. PMF Program mentors are senior-graded volunteers outside the Fellow's normal chain of command who can provide leadership, insight, guidance, and objectivity to Fellows during their fellowships and thereafter. Mentors serve as role models and personal advisors to convey positive information about the Department's mission, policies, rules and regulations. PMF supervisors and PMF Coordinator(s) will assist Fellows in identifying appropriate mentors and will ensure the PMF/mentor relationship has been established. Fellows may also be paired with other skilled and experienced employees for networking, and developing other insights and skills in preparation for managerial and supervisory positions.

CONVERSIONS.

- a. An ERB-certified Fellow must be appointed without further competition to a full-time, permanent position;
- b. Fellows must be noncompetitively converted to career or career conditional appointments and may be converted and promoted simultaneously;
- c. Conversions must be effective on or before the expiration of the Fellow's appointment, including extensions;
- d. Conversions to competitive service appointments are not allowed prior to satisfactory completion of the requirements of the Program, and the bureaus/offices ERB certification of the 2-year appointment.

PROBATIONARY PERIOD. Once a Fellow is non-competitively appointed to career or career-conditional employment he/she does **not** serve a probationary period and acquires competitive status immediately upon appointment.

CERTIFICATION OF COMPLETION.

- a. Upon a Fellow's completion of the Program, the Department's Training Officer's Council must evaluate each Fellow, and determine whether the bureaus/offices ERB or equivalent can certify in writing that he/she has met all the requirements of the Program, has demonstrated successful performance and developmental expectations set forth in the individual's performance plan and IDP and, if so, make that certification;
- b. All ERB certifications are forwarded to the Department's PMF Coordinator with a memo which is to include the bureau name, Fellow's name, social security number, conversion date, outcome of the ERB review (successfully completed or did not successfully complete/will not be converted), and contact information. This information will be forwarded to OPM.

c. Fellows must be notified no later than 30 calendar days prior to the expiration of their appointment in the Program;

d. If the Fellow is not certified, he/she may request reconsideration by the OPM Director/designee.

SATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE. To progress in a grade and complete the program, Fellows must attain a performance rating of “fully successful” or equivalent for all the critical elements established in their performance plans. Supervisors cannot allow a conversion action to occur if the Fellow’s performance is less than fully successful or equivalent. All Fellows must be ERB certified before they can be converted to a career or career conditional position in the Federal service.

MARGINAL PERFORMANCE. Fellows will be given assistance in improving whenever their performance rating is determined to be below “fully successful” or equivalent. Fellows performing below fully successful are expected to have additional progress reviews.

Failure to meet the minimum standards outlined in the position description and performance plan can lead to warnings, termination, or other corrective action as appropriate. It is the responsibility of the supervisor with oversight from the bureau/office PMF Coordinator(s) to review, and follow established regulations when addressing performance or conduct. Procedures should take into consideration the Fellow’s IDP, performance plan, and performance reviews. Procedures for disciplinary actions should include counseling, rights for veterans, notification to Fellow of intent not to certify 30 calendar days prior to the end of the fellowship, and/or notification to the PMF Department’s Coordinator of the decision to terminate within 15 days of the decision.

The supervisor and bureau/office PMF Coordinator(s) should attempt to resolve performance or conduct issues before the end of the two year fellowship, but should not convert Fellows who have demonstrated ongoing performance or conduct problems.

APPOINTMENT EXTENSIONS. Under rare and unusual circumstances, heads of bureaus/offices may extend the 2-year appointment for up to 120 days. Requests for extensions for more than 120 days, and up to 1 year must be submitted in writing to OPM through the Department’s PMF Coordinator and be received at least 90 days before the end of the appointment. The request must include specific reasons for requesting the scheduled extension. At anytime during an extension, the PMF may be converted to a career or career conditional appointment if performance is satisfactory, and certification is granted by the ERB or equivalent.

TERMINATIONS. The Fellow appointment expires at the end of the 2-year fellowship period. If the Fellow has not been granted an extension or has not successfully completed the Program, the Fellow’s appointment terminates.

If the Fellow is not appointed at the end of the Program or the initial Fellows appointment has not been extended, the appointment expires when certification for program completion is denied or when the OPM Director, or the Director's designee, denies the agency's request for an extension. Written notification must be provided to OPM when a Fellow is terminated. Either the supervisor or Fellow can terminate the PMF appointment. If a proposed termination is initiated by the supervisor, the basis of the termination will be related to misconduct, poor performance, or suitability.

MOVEMENT TO OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES. A Fellow may move to another agency at any time during his/her appointment in the program. In order to remain in the program, the Fellow must separate from the current agency and the new employing agency must appoint the participant without a break in service.

The Fellow does not begin a new period in the program upon appointment by the new employing agency. Because there is not break in service, time served under the previous appointment will apply towards the completion of the program with the new agency.

The bureau/office PMF Coordinator(s) must notify the Department PMF Coordinator when the PMF leaves DOC. The Department's PMF Coordinator will notify OPM when a Fellow moves to another Federal agency.

WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PROGRAM. Fellows may withdraw from the program at any time by resigning from his/her appointment. Such withdrawal will be treated as a resignation from the Federal service. However, any obligations established upon admission and appointment (for example, such as recruitment bonus, etc.) will apply.

A Fellow who held a career or career-conditional appointment in an agency immediately before entering the program or who withdraws from the program for reasons that are not related to misconduct, poor performance, or suitability may, at DOC's discretion, be placed in a career or career-conditional position. DOC's determination in this regard is not subject to appeal.

The bureau/office PMF Coordinator(s) must notify the Department's PMF Coordinator when a Fellow withdraws from the program. The Department's PMF Coordinator will notify OPM when a Fellow withdraws from the Program.

READMISSION. If a Fellow withdraws from the program for reasons that are related to misconduct, poor performance, or suitability as determined by the bureau/office PMF Coordinator(s), he or she may not be readmitted to the program.

If a Fellow withdraws from the program for reasons that are **not related** to misconduct, poor performance, or suitability, he/she may petition the bureau/office PMF Coordinator(s) for readmission and reappointment to the program. Such a petition must be in writing and include appropriate justification. Upon consideration of that petition, DOC may submit a written request seeking OPM approval to readmit and appoint the individual to the program. OPM's final determination regarding readmission and reappointment is not subject to appeal.

RESIGNATION. Fellows who resign at any time prior to completion of the Program do not have reinstatement eligibility for competitive service positions based on the PMF appointment and cannot be reinstated into the PMF program.

STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM. Bureaus/offices are authorized to repay Federally-insured student loans. The Departmental policy can be found in Department Administrative Order, 202-957, Department of Commerce Repayment of Student Loan Policy.

The PMF Program is not a graduate fellowship program for the purposes of Federal student loan deferment. Borrowers may not defer repayment of their loans based on their participation in the PMF Program. Additional information may be obtained on the Federal Student Aid website at <http://studentaid.ed.gov>.

TRAVEL EXPENSES. Bureaus/offices are authorized, but not required, to pay travel expenses for pre-employment interviews and first post duty stations. However, travel expenses incurred to attend OPM and Departmental-sponsored training, are responsibilities of the bureau/office.

REDUCTION IN FORCE. Fellows are in the excepted service, Tenure Group II, for purposes of Reduction in force, under CFR 351.502.

APPEAL RIGHTS. Fellows are excepted service employees within the meaning of Chapters 43 and 75 in title 5 United States Code, and have appeal rights as provided therein. For systems not covered by 5 U.S.C. Chapters 43 or 75, Fellows have appeal rights as provided by the equivalent authorities under that system.

REFERENCES: Executive Order 12645, 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 213.3102 (ii), 5 CFR 362, 5 CFR 531.203 (c), 5 CFR 315.708, DAO 202-430, DAO 202-957, DAO 202-335. OPM PMF Guide for Agencies: <http://www.pmf.opm.gov/Documents/GuideForAgencies.PDF>

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